

## CURRICULUM ALIGNMENT WITH STATE LEARNING STANDARDS

### What the Research Says

*Curriculum alignment* can be defined as the degree to which expectations and assessments are in agreement and serve in conjunction with one another to guide the system in ensuring that students learn what they are expected to know and do (Webb, 1997). More specific to the academic review process and Virginia's education reform initiatives, *alignment* may be defined as follows:

**The degree of agreement between the local curriculum and the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) that ensures valid and accurate information about student performance in an academic content area when measured by the SOL tests.**

Alignment, therefore, is achieved through the establishment of:

- 1) Content - what students should know and be able to do (SOL);
- 2) A curriculum developed for each set of the broad content standards; and
- 3) Systems of assessments matched with the content.

In an aligned system, all content standards must be accounted for in some manner (Mitchell, 1996).

Fenwick English (1997) summarizes the importance of curriculum alignment when he says, "Kids do better on tests when you teach them what it is you're going to test them on than if you don't. There's no research to dispute that."

According to English (1997), curriculum, instruction, and assessments must be aligned so that what is taught is tested and what is tested is taught.

### What Virginia's Educational Reform Says

The *Standards of Quality* (SOQ) require the Board of Education to establish "educational objectives" (known as the *Standards of Learning* or SOL) and to revise them periodically. Local school boards are also required to "implement these objectives." The SOQ also authorize the Board of Education to provide assessments that determine the level of achievement of the SOL by all students (22.1-253.13:1).

The SOA require school divisions to develop curricula based upon the SOL for students in grades K-12. Classroom instruction of the SOL must be designed to accommodate all students (8 VAC 20-131-70). Beginning with the ninth grade class of 2000-01, students must pass prescribed numbers of SOL tests to be eligible for Standard and Advanced Studies diplomas (8 VAC 20-131-50).

## CURRICULUM ALIGNMENT INDICATORS

Number	Descriptor
<b>CA 1</b>	<b><u>Written Curriculum</u></b>
CA 1.1	Making curriculum resources and supplementary materials available for use by teachers
CA 1.2	Establishing specific learning objectives that align with state learning standards and address essential understandings, knowledge, and skills
CA 1.3	Selecting instructional strategies and designing learning activities that align with state learning standards and address essential understandings, knowledge, and skills
CA 1.4	Developing daily lesson plans that fit logically within the unit and within the context of the overall curriculum
CA 1.5	Using student performance data to develop daily lesson plans that reflect consideration of the learning strengths and needs of students
CA 1.6	Monitoring teacher implementation of the curriculum throughout the year
<b>CA 2</b>	<b><u>Taught Curriculum</u></b>
CA 2.1	Focusing instruction on specific learning objectives that promote the attainment of state learning standards and address essential understandings, knowledge, and skills
CA 2.2	Using available curriculum resources and supplementary materials appropriately to promote attainment of state learning standards
CA 2.3	Presenting accurate knowledge through meaningful contexts and connected disciplines
CA 2.4	Employing instructional strategies that are research-based and proven effective
CA 2.5	Assigning projects and tasks that require students to integrate and apply their learning in meaningful contexts and to reflect on what they have learned
CA 2.6	Providing students with learning experiences that engage them in active learning
CA 2.7	Differentiating instruction to meet the identified needs of individual students and groups of students
CA 2.8	Providing all students access to available materials, resources, and services to support learning
CA 2.9	Providing teachers with feedback on the alignment of instruction to state learning standards and essential understandings, knowledge, and skills
<b>CA 3</b>	<b><u>Assessed Curriculum</u></b>
CA 3.1	Assessing student progress on a regular basis
CA 3.2	Ensuring that assessments are aligned with state learning standards and essential understandings, knowledge, and skills
CA 3.3	Providing opportunities for students to take tests that are similar in content and format to state assessments
CA 3.4	Using a variety of classroom-based assessment methods and tools (student self-evaluation, performance checklists, rubrics, scales, projects, products, tests, quizzes) before, during, and after units of study to monitor student progress

<b>Number</b>	<b>Descriptor</b>
CA 3.5	Providing assessments that require students to use knowledge, comprehension, application and reasoning skills
CA 3.6	Periodically reporting student progress toward mastery of learning objectives to students and parents in a way that is clear and understandable
CA 3.7	Monitoring the results of classroom-based assessments to ensure attainment of the knowledge and skills required for success on state assessments